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Investigating the Impact of Effective Marketing Factors on increasing sales of Social Drama Films: A Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose: Considering the role of marketing in the sale of various products, the aim of the present research was to investigate the impact of effective marketing factors on increasing film sales.

Methodology: This was an applied quantitative correlational study. The study population included media producers, directors and experts in 2019. A total of 294 participants were selected using convenience sampling according to Cochran's formula. The data collection tool included a researcher-made 34-item questionnaire, the validity of which was confirmed by expert opinion and factor analysis, and its reliability was estimated at 0.83 by using Cronbach's alpha method. Data analysis was carried out using correlation coefficients and structural equation modeling methods in SPSS and LISREL software.

Findings: The results showed that all nine subscales of effective marketing factors including evaluation and identification of the target audience, evaluation and identification of market opportunities, evaluation and identification of the topic, evaluation and selection of film elements, evaluation and selection of appropriate advertising strategy, evaluation and selection of appropriate promotion strategy, evaluation and selection of the appropriate distribution system and channel, evaluation and selection of the appropriate pricing strategy, and the use of methods, tools, and potentials to increase sales had a direct and significant effect on the increase in sales of social drama films ($P<0.05$).

Conclusion: The results indicated the effective role of all marketing factors in increasing the sales of social drama films. Therefore, planning to use effective marketing factors to increase film sales seems necessary.

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1. Introduction

Cultural industries such as cinema and television play an important role in increasing employment, economic growth, strengthening national identity and achieving sustainable identity. This industry as one of the components of cultural industries can promote and strengthen art and other related industries and create wealth, prestige and jobs (Estes, Brotto & Busacca, 2018). Media organizations operate in the economic system to meet both public and private needs, and the needs and demands of four groups including media owners, audiences, advertisers (buyers of media time or space to convey their messages to audiences) and media staff (Chawla & Chodak, 2021). Film is the only media art that allows visualizing all human imaginations, and also help a person embodies the mentalities and ideas arising from his/her imagination in the same way as they occur to another mind and gives it movement and life (Dagsupta et al., 2016). With the development of film production technology, this ability has now reached its highest level so that the film is now able to create dream images in the same way we dream, that is, regardless of the physical rules of the material world and the possibility of transforming objects, situations and times into each other in the real time manner and the like (Karimi et al., 2019). The film enables a person to share his/her imagination with others, not in the form of narration, explanation and interpretation, but by showing it in a way that makes the audience feel present in the film reality and experience the film's imagination (Rao, Ravid, Gretz, Chen & Basuroy, 2017). The film scenes are so similar to everyday realities that they are believable for us, and the films use their special artistic techniques and tricks to depict reality in such a way that it actually has a special narration, not an objective narration. In other words, the film shows the illusion of reality (not reality itself), but this illusion deals with our feelings and emotions (not thoughts) and, thus, are accepted as reality (Bergera et al., 2018).

Marketing is defined as a social process through which individuals and groups produce and exchange goods with each other and satisfy their own needs or those of others (Kim et al., 2021). Marketing is an activity aimed at satisfying needs and wishes through process of exchange, marketing management, that is, analysis, planning, implementation and control of the programs designed to provide the desired exchanges with the desired markets to achieve predetermined goals. The marketing process includes identifying the market, customer's needs and demands, designing a customer-oriented marketing strategy, preparing an integrated more useful marketing plan, establishing a profitable relationship with customers and making them happy, getting benefits from customers for profitability and creating special value for customers (Montanes, Suarez-Vazquez & Quevedo, 2014). Overall, there are three types of marketing strategies including undifferentiated, differentiated and concentrated marketing. If the organization offers only one type of product or service to the market and tries to attract all buyers with one marketing plan, it has used the undifferentiated marketing strategy, if the same organization uses different marketing plans to offer several products in each sub-market, is called differentiated marketing, and if it concentrates all its activities on one or more segments of a large and profitable market, it has used a concentrated marketing strategy (Chen & Lin, 2019). In undifferentiated marketing, the organization does not pay attention to differences in the needs of the buyers or the demand curves, but considers the market as a set, satisfies the similar and common needs of consumers, and advertising costs are minimized. In differentiated marketing, the organization decides to operate in several sub-markets or all sub-markets of a market and its goal is to increase the sale volume. In concentrated marketing, instead of a small share of a large market, a large share of a small market is emphasized, and this marketing method tries to take a major part of a small market for itself (Zollo, Filieri, Rialti & Yoon, 2020).

Marketing definitions have changed over time to cover a wider range of applications. The first people who tackled film marketing sought its roots more in cultural studies, but they are brought them closer to this goal by the definition provided by the American Marketing Association (AMA) (2004). AMA defined this construct as organizational functional marketing and a set of processes for building, communicating and delivering value to customers and managing customer relationships in a way that benefits the organization and stakeholders (Shaon et al., 2019). Film marketing is an exchange process that aims to provide the audience with a high value at a minimum cost and create a surplus value in the exchange between the audience, the

film and competitors at the same time (Sobocinska et al., 2017). Marketing is the art of persuading consumers to consume through informing them of a suitable and high-quality product and encouraging them to watch and buy it. Film marketing is defined as all advertising, promotion and public relations activities that make the audience aware of a film (Chuu, Chang & Zaichkowsky, 2009). Film marketing uses teasers, posters, media, criticisms, news, blogs, websites, etc. to encourage audiences to choose and watch films (Shao, Li, Morrison & Wu, 2016). Overall, film marketing deals with two parts, customer and producer, which are complementary to each other, and films will be successful when they provide unique and special value to customers and can attract their attention, commitment and purchasing behavior (Dupont & Augros, 2013). Film marketing is a complex process that requires creativity and huge capital, and this is especially evident in the case of high-budget films. Because the success or failure of a film in the wide and competitive market, is now evaluated based on its sales, and that's why many big film companies spend a lot of money on film marketing and sale programs (Chang et al., 2020).

There have been few and scattered researches on film marketing factors and artistic products, and the results of the most important ones are briefly presented below.

In a study of the model of internationalization of Iranian film and cinema in gaining a share of regional and international markets, Tabesh, Farhangi, Hosseini & Shiri (2021) concluded that the unbalanced international growth of Iranian cinema is the result of the unbalanced attitude of policymakers and cinematographers in recent decades; while, this defect can be removed by paying due attention to the target content and consciously choosing the audience and the market and a sustainable development and success can be achieved by benefiting from diverse markets.

Karimi et al.(2019) conducted a research on dentification of factors affecting the economy of Iranian cinemas and concluded that price has a significant negative effect on demand, per capita income, the share of annual expenses for entertainment, the number of cinemas and the number of seats have a positive significant effect on demand and the cultural, personal, psychological, political factors, planning and characteristics of the film had a significant positive effect on the desire to go to the cinema.

In a research titled marketing and consumption of art products in the film industry, Ulker-Demirel, Akyol & Simsek (2018) referred to people, film characteristics, script, price, advertising and distribution channels as effective factors in this field. They also found that advertisement, male and female actors and variety of distribution channels had a positive effect on purchase intention.

Salavatian, Rohbakhsh & Derafshi (2018) conducted a research on the factors affecting the marketing of Iranian films through social media. They found five categories of factors including technical factors (social media security and graphical quality), content factors (film quality, teaser attractiveness or uploaded announce, posting interesting and effective dialogues, opinions expressed by those who saw the film, opinions expressed by critics, directors and actors, diversity in the subject of the film and the presence of film stars), process factors (correct choice of social media for film marketing, verbal advertising or word-of-mouth marketing, social media reputation, forming film-interested groups, multiple marketing networks, interaction and communication with users, creating a social page during production, knowing the audience, broadcasting behind-the-scenes, and streaming and advertising by fans), message management (disseminating appropriate and correct information and building trust for users) and social factors (broadcasting censored parts of the film on social media and linking the film with political events). Goudarzi & Jafari Haftkhani (2018) came to the conclusion that film and cinema marketing consists of four components or product factors (the idea and content of the film, the classification of the film based on its genre and the role of the star, director and producer in the film), place (location of production and the amount and variety of cinema location), price (pricing method and share of different costs in pricing) and promotion and advertising (sales representative, film… and advertising content and film criticism and advertising content including posters, teasers and word-of-mouth advertising) .

In a research titled prioritizing film tourism marketing activities, Salehdoust & Tajzadeh Namin (2016) referred to use of the film effect, informing the public using the media, encouraging studios and film

production companies to make films in the location and promoting the film location as the most important factors, respectively.

In a study on strategic elements of social media marketing, Khani Saran & PilehRoud (2016) introduced four areas of social media marketing, social media marketing culture, social media marketing structure and social media marketing management.

In a study on the design of a strategic cinema marketing model, Sabaghian, Ebrahimi & Farhangi (2014) concluded that promotion, physical assets, product, process, location, manpower and price were the most important factors, respectively.

Regarding the importance and necessity of the present research, we can refer to few and scattered researches on films and art products, and the need to increase the film sales through coherent relevant researches. Another important point is that globalization in the cultural field is now particularly important in increasing the trade of cultural goods, especially films. Besides, the film can play an effective role in improving and promoting the culture of any society and make the culture and social environment of the society known to other countries and cultures and provide the basis for attracting tourists and cultural exchanges. One of the effective factors in increasing film sales is the use of marketing strategy, which can attract the audience. Therefore, considering the role of marketing in the sale of various artistic products, including films, and the existence of few and scattered researches in this field, the aim of the present study was to investigate the impact of marketing factors on increasing the sales of films.

2. Methodology

This was an applied quantitative correlational study. The study population included media producers, directors and experts in 2019. A total of 294 participants were selected according to Cochran's formula using convenience sampling.

To conduct the study, the samples were first specified, and the importance and necessity of the research and the commitment of the researcher to comply with ethical considerations such as privacy of the samples, confidentiality of personal information, etc., were explained to them. Besides, if the samples had any questions about the research, they could freely ask their questions and the researcher answered them. They were then asked to answer the research tool carefully and patiently. It should be noted that the researcher explained to the samples that there is no right or wrong answer and the best answer is the answer that reflects their real and current situation. After completing the research tool, the researcher checked them for completeness.

The data collection tool included a 34-question researcher-made questionnaire. It consists of 9 factors namely evaluating and identifying the target audience, evaluating and identifying market opportunities, evaluating and identifying the topic, evaluating and selecting film elements, evaluating and selecting the appropriate advertising strategy, evaluating and selecting the appropriate promotional strategy, evaluating and selecting appropriate distribution system and channel, the evaluation and selection of the appropriate pricing strategy and the use of methods, tools and potentials in order to increase sales. The above tool was prepared by reviewing and studying documents related to the research topic with the help of faculty members. In addition to 34 questions, four questions also examined demographic information including gender, level of education, working years and marital status. The questions were answered based on a five-point Likert scale (1=very little, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high).

The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts' opinion. In other words, the experts confirmed that the items and questions sufficiently measure the desired concept and the related domain. The validity of the questionnaire was also confirmed by the factor analysis method. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated α=0.83 using Cronbach's alpha method. Reliability means that the respondents get almost the same score in the same instrument at two time intervals.

To analyze the collected demographic information, including gender, education, years of work experience and marriage, the frequency and the frequency percentage indices, and the data obtained from the researcher-

made questionnaire, the descriptive indices, i.e. mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficients and structural equation modeling were used in SPSS and LISREL software.

3. Findings

The study population included 294 individuals, most of whom were male (65.99%), married (56.12%), had a bachelor's degree (40.82%), and had 6-10 years of work experience (45.92%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of frequency and frequency percentage of demographic information of the research subjects

Variable	Levels	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Variable	Levels	Frequency	Frequency percentage
Gender	Male	194	65.99	Marital status	Married	165	56.12
	Female	100	34.01		Single	129	43.88
Level of education	Diploma	68	23.13	Years of work experience	1-5 years	76	25.85
	BA.	120	40.82		6-10 years	135	45.92
	MA.	65	22.11		11-15 years	53	18.03
	P.H.D	41	13.94		Above 15 years	30	10.20

The results showed that the assumption of normality was confirmed in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for all variables ($P<0.05$) and there was also a positive and significant correlation between the variables with an increase in film sales ($p<0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficients and normality of studied variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation with film sales	P-value	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	P
Evaluation and identification of the target audience	3.54	0.76	0.57	0.05>	1.24	0.05<
Evaluation and identification of market opportunities	2.93	0.68	0.66	0.05>	3.65	0.05<
Evaluation and identification of the topic	3.41	0.85	0.90	0.05>	3.06	0.05<
Evaluation and selection of film elements	4.07	0.93	0.24	0.05>	2.36	0.05<
Evaluation and selection of the	2.68	0.64	0.76	0.05>	2.53	0.05<

appropriate advertising strategy						
Evaluation and selection of appropriate promotion strategy	3.55	0.88	0.56	0.05>	2.13	0.05<
Evaluation and selection of the appropriate distribution system and channel	4.12	0.81	0.42	0.05>	3.54	0.05<
Evaluation and selection of the right pricing strategy	2.76	0.59	0.53	0.05>	0.76	0.05<

The fit indices of the model of marketing factors affecting the increase in film sales indicate the appropriate fit of the model based on the χ^2/df (<3), RMSEA (>0.08), and GFI, AGFI, NFI and CFI (>0.90).
The results showed that all nine effective marketing factors including evaluation and identification of the target audience, evaluation and identification of market opportunities, evaluation and identification of the topic, evaluation and selection of film elements, evaluation and selection of appropriate advertising strategy, evaluation and selection of appropriate promotion strategy, evaluation and selection of appropriate distribution system and channel, evaluation and selection of appropriate pricing strategy and the use of methods, tools and potentials, had a direct and significant effect on the increase in film sales($P< 0.05$) (Table 3 and Figure 1).

Table 3. Effect of marketing factors on increasing film sales in research subjects

Effects	Path coefficients	R^2	P
The effect of evaluation and identification the target audience on increasing film sales	0.67	0.32	0.05>
The effect of evaluation and identification of market opportunities on increasing film sales	0.90	0.44	0.05>
The effect of topic evaluation and identification on increasing film sales	0.25	0.82	0.05>
The effect of evaluation and selection of film	0.28	0.06	0.05>

elements on increasing film sales			
The effect of evaluation and selection of the right advertising strategy on increasing film sales	0.76	0.58	0.05>
The effect of evaluation and selection of the right promotion strategy on increasing film sales	0.28	0.32	0.05>
The effect of evaluation and selection of the right distribution system and channel on increasing film sales	0.17	0.18	0.05>
The effect of evaluation and selection of the right pricing strategy on increasing film sales	0.25	0.28	0.05>
The effect of using methods, tools and potentials on increasing film sales	0.48	0.43	0.05>

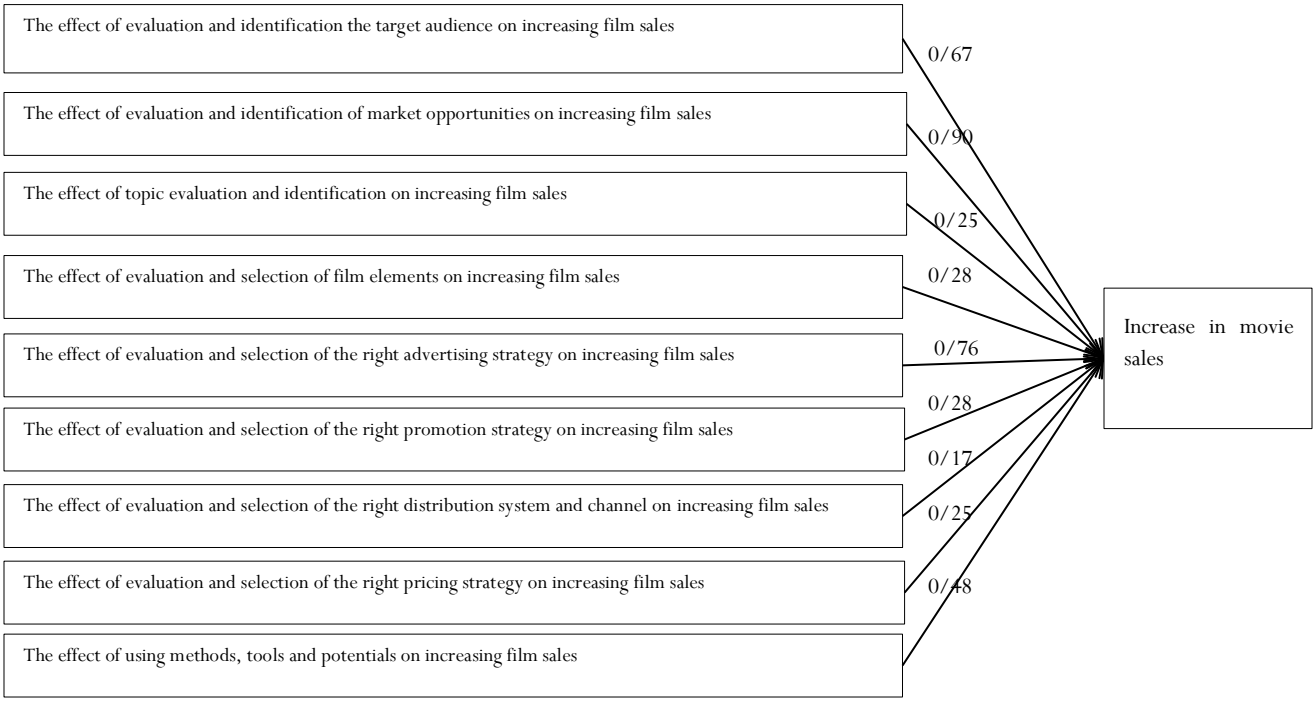

Figure 1. The results of the path coefficients of the marketing factors affecting the increase in film sales

4. Discussion

Considering the role of marketing in the sale of various art products, including films, and the existence of few related researches, the present research was conducted with the aim of investigating the impact of marketing factors on increasing the film sales.

The results showed that all nine subscales of effective marketing factors including evaluation and identification of the target audience, evaluation and identification of market opportunities, evaluation and identification of the topic, evaluation and selection of film elements, evaluation and selection of appropriate advertising strategy, evaluation and selection of appropriate promotion strategy, evaluation and selection of the appropriate distribution system and channel, evaluation and selection of the appropriate pricing strategy, and the use of methods, tools and potentials had a direct and significant effect on the increase in film sales. These results are somehow similar to the results of studies by Tabesh et al (2021), Karimi (2019), Ulker-Demirel et al (2018), Salavatian et al. (2018), Goudarzi & Jafari Haftkhani (2018), Salehdoust & Tajzadeh Namin (2016), Khani Saran & PilehRoud (2016) and Sabaghian et al. (2014).

To interpret the results, it can be stated that due to the unknown nature of the film market and non-application of suitable production strategies, the diversity and differentiation of manufactured products should be increased by conducting relevant studies to understand the market and its capabilities, as well as applying suitable production strategies. Then, the process of strategic marketing should be continued by providing background and strategic conditions and taking into account the interfering conditions affecting the selection of suitable strategies. This means that considering and understanding the background conditions such as the film producer, film production elements, pricing and brand management strategies as well as interfering conditions such as the popularity of the film among the target audience, the life cycle of the film, the purchasing power of the target audience, the synergy of traditional content with new technology markets for supply and sales will lead to the adoption of appropriate strategies for distribution, concentration and influence in the market. In the next stage of the marketing process, the central conditions or the strategic

marketing of the film should be provided and applied in order to improve the position of the film in the consumer's shopping basket as an outcome. The research indicated that the three factors of promotion, distribution and pricing can be deduced as the basic elements in most of the marketing models presented or the proposed combined marketing models. Overall, the results showed that adopting appropriate strategies in the areas of audience identification, market opportunities, topic, selection of film elements, advertising strategy, promotion, distribution, pricing and application of methods, tools and potentials had a significant effect on increasing the film sales. Therefore, they should be included in film marketing models. Therefore, each of the components of this model can be presented as research or practical proposals, and it is recommended to investigate the possibility of generalization and application of this model in the field of film industry marketing in future studies. Besides, it is suggested to investigate each of the mentioned factors or components separately and as well as their impact on the increase in film sales. According to the foregoing, film producers and sellers can take advantage of this research and its results and provide the appropriate conditions for increasing their film sales.

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